TRAIL OF CTHULHU
QUICKSTART RULES

Pelgrane Press

Credits

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Introduction

In the mists of prehistory, alien gods and monsters fell to Earth and warred over our planet, unleashing cosmic science and inconceivable powers until continents sank and seas boiled. Exhausted or defeated, They fell into an aeons-long slumber, and the human race obliviously goes about its business over Their tombs. But there are those who want to seek out the fragments of the lore They left behind. Those who want to learn the secrets of the stars, and the true names of the dimensions to gain the dead gods' powers. Those want to wake Them up.

You are among the few brave souls who know the truth – about the mad gods at the center of the universe, about the Great Old Ones who will uncaringly obliterate the Earth, about the ancient legends of undying evil that are all coming true. You must make sure nobody ever finds out -- or the world will wake up screaming.

You have to keep the doors to the Outside from swinging open – no matter what the cost in life or sanity. You have to piece together clues from books bound in human skin, from eviscerated corpses covered in ichor, and from inscriptions carved on walls built before humanity evolved. You have to go wherever the answers are and do what needs to be done.

Do YOU dare to follow ... the trail of Cthulhu?

Trail of Cthulhu is a GUMSHOE-powered game of occult investigation and cosmic horror. So, what does all that mean?

What's GUMSHOE?

GUMSHOE is a beginner-friendly rules system which makes investigative tabletop roleplaying games more fun. The core idea of GUMSHOE is that it's always more enjoyable when the Game Moderator (GM) can give the players the information they need to solve a mystery, so the players can piece the clues together and proceed based on their deductions.

For more about how GUMSHOE works, see page 5.

What's Occult Investigation?

In *Trail of Cthulhu*, you take on the role of an Investigator. You might be a detective, or a plucky reporter, an archaeologist, or a scientist – but whatever your profession, you are an inquisitive soul in search of terrible truths. *Trail of Cthulhu*'s default setting is the tumultuous decade of the 1930s – the decade of Indiana Jones and Sam Spade, but also the Great Depression and the Second World War.

For a sample Investigator, see page 7.

What's Cosmic Horror?

Trail of Cthulhu is inspired by the Cthulhu Mythos of H. P. Lovecraft and his literary descendants like Robert E. Howard and August Derleth. Alien gods and eldritch entities wait for the stars to come right; nefarious cults and sinister sorcerers lurk in the shadows. *Trail of Cthulhu* can be played in one of two modes: Purist for players who enjoy the nihilistic thrill of watching their Investigators spiral into despair and madness, and Pulp for those who want to pit tommy guns and dynamite against the Mythos!

For more about cosmic horror, see page 15.

What's New In 2nd Edition?

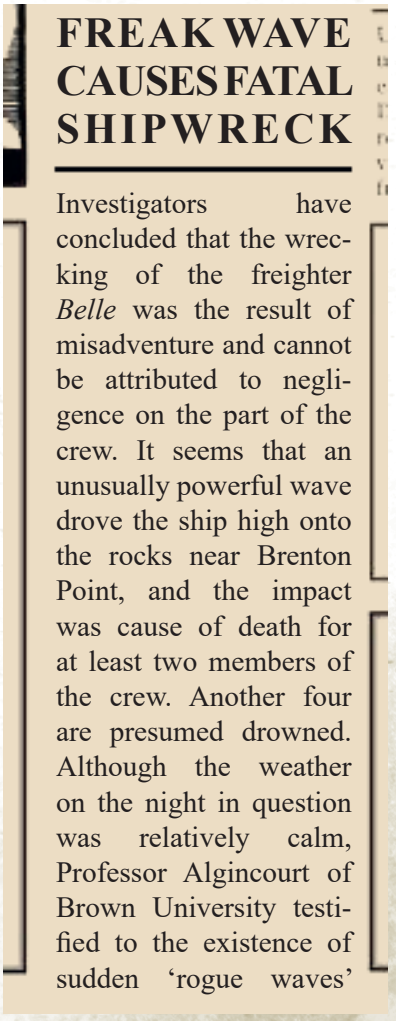
If you're already familiar with *Trail*'s award-winning 1st edition, skip to page 16 for the inside scoop on what's changed in the new incarnation.

GUMSHOE for Players

In *Trail of Cthulhu* (and other GUMSHOE games), your character has two types of abilities – **Investigative abilities** and **General abilities.**

Investigative abilities *always* work. If there's a clue to be found, and you have the right ability, you get the information.

- For example, if you've got **Library Use**, and you ask, 'Can my Investigator find anything in the university library about the wreck of the Belle?', then the GM says 'yes, you find this old newspaper cutting…'



FREAK WAVE CAUSES FATAL SHIPWRECK

Investigators have concluded that the wrecking of the freighter *Belle* was the result of misadventure and cannot be attributed to negligence on the part of the crew. It seems that an unusually powerful wave drove the ship high onto the rocks near Brenton Point, and the impact was cause of death for at least two members of the crew. Another four are presumed drowned. Although the weather on the night in question was relatively calm, Professor Algincourt of Brown University testified to the existence of sudden 'rogue waves'

There's no dice to roll, no chance you'll miss a clue - but how you *interpret* and *use* that clue to solve the overall mystery is up to you.

The number of points you have in an Investigative ability is called a **pool**, and you can **spend points** from your pool for extra information, or added benefits.

> *For example, spending a point from your Library Use pool might let you find another book listing the occurrences of similar freak waves, or convince the elderly librarian to share her recollections of the Waite family.*

General abilities, by contrast, are what you use when the possibility of failure would be narratively interesting. They're used for combat and perilous, uncertain situations, and you use them in a **test**. You spend as many points as you wish from the relevant General ability pool, then roll a six-sided die (d6). If the total of your spend + the die roll equals or exceeds the Difficulty (typically 4+), you succeed!

> *For example, you're careening around a mountainous path in a beat-up old car, trying to escape an eldritch horror. You spend 3 points from your Driving pool, then roll a d6. You roll a 2 which, added to your 3-point spend gives a total of 5, exceeding the Difficulty of 4, so your character succeeds in keeping the car on the road and escaping.*

It's really that simple.

In combat, the Difficulty for attacks using Scuffling, Firearms or Weapons is determined by the target's Hit Threshold. On a hit, damage is determined by rolling a die and applying the weapon's Damage Modifier (-2 for a fist, +0 to +2 for most weapons).

Damage gets subtracted from the target's Health; player characters are Hurt at 0, Seriously Wounded at -6 and Dead at -12. Game Moderator Characters (GMCs) are usually out of the fight if reduced to 0 Health.

GUMSHOE for Game Moderators

On the GM's side of the game, Investigative abilities mean you can design more complex and compelling mysteries. You don't need to worry about the players missing vital information because of an unlucky die roll.

Additionally, each of the characters has a **Drive**, a reason for them to look into the mystery, which you can use to encourage hesitant players to take part in the investigation.

Trail of Cthulhu provides a straightforward structure for adventure design, broken down into a series of **scenes** so you can more easily plot the flow of information:

The Hook

- The instigating incident that gets the characters involved in the mystery.

The Scenario Spine

- A series of roleplayed scenes, set in locations and featuring GM characters (GMCs), from which the Investigators collect clues to help them solve the mystery.

The Horrible Truth

- The terrible reveal awaiting the players at the adventure's end.

Core clues link scenes in the adventure, ensuring the Investigators always have a clear path forward to the ending.

Sample Investigator

Here's archaeologist Dashwood's character sheet. You can see a blank character sheet on p. 23.

OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITI

Player Name:

Sanity measures your belief in a rational universe - and your exposure to the cosmic horrors of the Mythos. Ordinary terrors won't erode your Sanity, but the Mythos will…

Drive determines why the character is emotionally driven to investigate the unknown

A character's choice of **occupation** determines some of their investigative and general abilities, as well as their starting Credit Rating and special talents.

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability is a measure of your character's composure and courage. Above 0, you're fine. 0 to -5, Shaken. -6 to -11, Blasted. -12 or below, Doomed!

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
(8)	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

When your **Health** is above 0, you're fine. 0 to -5, you're Hurt. -6 to -11, Seriously Wounded. -12 or below – Dead!

Investigator Name: Dashwood
Drive: Curiosity
Occupation: Archaeologist
Pillars of Sanity: The hunt for the truth

Sources of Stability: Friends and family that help you retain your Stability.

Pillars of Sanity: Philosophical beliefs or concepts that undergird your Sanity.

Sources of Stability

Your colleague in the Archaeology department, Dr. Woods.

Your younger sister, Katherine.

Contacts & Notes

You're a professor of archaeology at Harvard – although you've spent little time in Boston in the last few years, as you've been working abroad at dig sites in Europe and the Middle East. It gives you a dizzying, sometimes nightmarish perspective when you look at the fabulous new buildi… the United States, … remain in a thousa…

Your character uses **Investigative abilities** to find clues and gather information about what's going on. Investigative abilities always work – you never roll for them!

Your character uses **General abilities** to overcome obstacles and perils. Spend points from your ability pool, roll a d6, and if your spend + die roll exceeds the Difficulty, you succeed!

Investigative Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Accounting		
Anthropology		1
Archaeology		2
Architecture		1
Art:		
Art History		
Assess Honesty		
Astronomy		1
Bargain		1
Biology		
Bureaucracy		
Chemistry		
Craft:		1
Ceramics		
Criminology		1
Cryptography		1
Cthulhu Mythos		
Flattery		1
Forensics		
Geology		1
High Society		

	Pool	Rating
History		2
Interrogation		
Intimidation		
Languages:		2
Arabic		
Persian		
Law		
Library Use		1
Locksmith		
Medicine		
Notice		1
Occult		1
Oral History		1
Outdoor Survival		1
Pharmacy		
Photography		1
Physics		
Reassurance		
Streetwise		1
Theology		1

General Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Athletics		8
Conceal		
Disguise		
Driving		2
Explosives		2
Filch		
Firearms		4
First Aid		2
Fleeing		
Health		8
Hypnosis		
Magic		
Mechanics		5
Piloting		4
Preparedness		6
Psychoanalysis		
Riding		2
Sanity		6
Scuffling		4
Sense Trouble		4
Shadowing		2
Stability		6
Stealth		4
Weapons		

Your ability **pool** is your currently unspent points. Your ability **rating** is your starting and maximum pool.

Hit Threshold: 4

Credit Rating: 4

Credit Rating measures a character's standing in society and financial resources

Cthulhu Mythos Potential

Magic Potential

Stranger Shores

The freighter *Belle* ran aground on the rocky shore near Brenton Point, Rhode Island two months ago. There were no survivors, and the ship's remained perched on the rocks ever since as the authorities argue over who's responsible for removing the wreck. While they bicker, something unwholesome is festering on board the rotting ship…

The Hook

Mysterious events trouble the area around the wreck of the *Belle*.

Scenario Spine

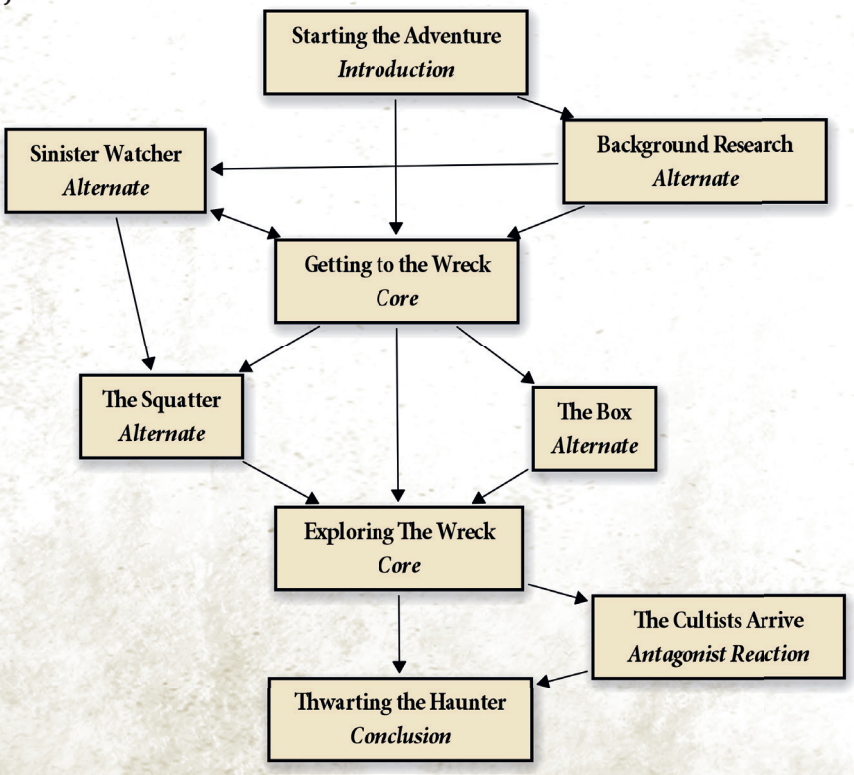
Once the GM has finished *Starting the Adventure*, the Investigators can do some *Background Research* into the shipwreck of the *Belle*. While they are *Getting to the Wreck,* they spot a strange item, *The Box*. On the wreck, the Investigators meet *The Squatter*, the brother of one of the drowned sailors. They can then spend time *Exploring the Wreck,* and end up *Finding the Gemstone*, which results in the manifestation of *The Haunter of the Wreck.* The Investigators are then left *Thwarting the Haunter*.

An optional subplot involves a *Sinister Watcher* which can lead to *The Cultists Arrive.*

The Horrible Truth

The *Belle* was smuggling the collection of a mysterious occult society, including a magical gemstone that can tear open the barriers between dimensions. When this shining trapezohedron was accidentally removed from its proper container, it distorted space and time, resulting in the *Belle* crashing on the cliff and fusing with the rock. Until the gem's returned to its casket, the distortions will continue to grow

Scene Flow Diagram



worse – releasing alien horrors into our world.

Scenes

Starting the Adventure

Scene Type: Introduction
Lead-Outs: Background Research, Getting to the Wreck

Depending on the Investigators and their Drives, the Game Moderator picks an appropriate hook. Possible starting points – and the clues that point the Investigators towards the wrecked ship – include:

- The Grissoms, a family holidaying in a beach house outside Newport, complain about strange nocturnal apparitions that terrified their children. They describe something flapping around the house that glowed with an unearthly blue light (see *The Haunter of the Wreck*, p. 12)

  » **(core clue) Reassurance** gets young Eustace Grissom to admit that the apparitions started after he threw stones at the nearby wrecked ship. (See *Getting to the Wreck*, p. 11)

- **(core clue)** An Investigator with **Astronomy** spots strange electric-blue lights in the sky in the vicinity of the wreck.

- **(core clue) Streetwise** picks up a rumour that the *Belle* was smuggling gold – and that the treasure wasn't found after the shipwreck. Maybe there's still something valuable on the wreck or on the shore nearby…

- A representative of an insurance company hires the Investigators to look into the circumstances of the shipwreck.

Background Research

Scene Type: Alternate
Lead-Ins: Starting the Adventure
Lead-Outs: Getting to the Wreck, Sinister Watcher

There's plenty of potential investigative legwork to do before heading out to the wreck.

- **Library Use:** The freighter *Belle* ran aground two months ago. She had a crew of six; four of them, including Captain Lews, are still missing and believed drowned, as only two bodies were found on board.

- **Oral History:** Ever since the *Belle* ran aground, there have been rumours of strange lights at night. Most likely beachcombers and salvagers, but there are wild stories about ghosts. Why, haven't you heard that everyone on board was dead when the ship was found?

  » **1**-point **Oral History** spend: The rumour is that the ship must have been deliberately run aground – how else could it have ended up on those rocks?

- **Streetwise:** The *Belle* was a rum-runner during Prohibition, smuggling whiskey from Canada. After repeal, Captain Lews fell on hard times; it's rumoured he was in debt to the Mob. Perhaps he ran the *Belle* onto the rocks deliberately, as an insurance scam?

- **Law:** The ownership of the *Belle* – and responsibility for dealing with the wreck – are a matter of some dispute. Apparently, some expensive law firm in Providence, Bell, Phibbs & Co., has intervened to keep the local commissioner of wrecks from taking anything off the *Belle*. That firm suggests old money – and a desire for privacy.

- **Criminology** convinces the local police to give the Investigators a look at the log of the *Belle*; the entries are suspiciously unremarkable, apart from a note describing an outbreak of sickness among the crew a day before the shipwreck.

- **1-point Occult** or **Oral History** spend: This all brings back memories of the unpleasantness with the Starry Wisdom sect, who were a strange church

The Haunter of the Dark

This adventure is inspired by Lovecraft's story "The Haunter of the Dark", which features a similar gemstone. The mysterious cult employing the law firm in Providence is the same Starry Wisdom sect that fled the town in 1877.

If you want to get into the right mood to run *Trail*, the best thing to do is reread some Lovecraft.

in Providence about 50 years ago. They worshipped some crystal they brought out of Egypt, and there were tales of devil bats and disappearances. They got run out of town back in 1877 or so. (See Lovecraft's "The Haunter of the Dark" for a fuller history.)

Pick a random Investigator in this scene to make a **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 5). If successful, the investigator realizes they're being watched by a tough-looking guy in a trenchcoat. (A 1-point **Streetwise** or **Criminology** spend recognizes him as Lou Feschi, a Boston-based private investigator.) If they confront him, run *Sinister Watcher.*

Sinister Watcher

Scene Type: Alternate
Lead-Ins: Background Research
Lead-Outs: Getting to the Wreck, The Squatter

Two-bit gumshoe Lou Feschi was hired by a Providence law firm to keep an eye on the wreck – and watch out for people asking questions about it. He has no idea *why* the law firm's interested in the wreck, but they're paying him handsomely to do so.

If the investigators confront him, he tries to stonewall them – and turns violent if restrained.

Lou Feschi, Cheap Detective

Abilities: Athletics 4, Driving 6, Firearms 4, Health 4, Scuffling 4, Weapons 3

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: d+1 (revolver) or d-2 (fist)

Intimidation (or **Bargain** and a bribe) gets some information out of him:

- His orders are to report anyone asking questions about the wreck. The law firm gave him a telephone number to ring. It was a long-distance number, to California.

  » **Assess Honesty:** Feschi intends to report his encounter with the investigators to his mysterious employers.

- He's already called the number once – to report some hobo squatting in the wreck (*The Squatter*, p. 11). Whoever answered the phone spoke in a strange whisper, and all they said was that they would take care of it soon. The voice unsettled Feschi, but he's too much of a pro (and needs the money too much) to let it bother him.

- He got the impression that someone else was coming to deal with the wreck.

- He tried shooing the hobo away from the wreck, but the rocks looked slippery and precarious and he didn't want to risk a fall. And, honestly, he doubts the wreck's going to last much longer. A pity – he could do with this job lasting a few days longer.

After encountering the Investigators, Feschi telephones the number he was given and reports the meeting. This likely precipitates *The Cultists Arrive* (p. 14) at the end of the scenario. The PCs can compel Feschi to keep quiet with a suitable **Interpersonal** spend.

Getting to the Wreck

Scene Type: Core
Lead-Ins: Starting the Adventure, Background Research, Sinister Watcher
Lead-Outs: The Box, Sinister Watcher, The Squatter, Exploring the Wreck

If the investigators didn't spot Lou Feschi during *Background Research,* then they get another chance here – Feschi might be watching the investigators through binoculars. Again, **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 5) spots his car. If the investigators confront him, run *Sinister Watcher.*

The *Belle*'s lodged on a rocky outcrop, well above the high water mark. To get to the ship, the Investigators need to climb across a narrow spur of stone, with a sheer drop to the crashing waves below.

- **(core clue) Notice:** Down at the bottom of the cliffs, washed by the waves, is what looks like an ornate metal box – more debris from the shipwreck, no doubt. See *The Box,* p. 11.
- **Streetwise:** Scrawled on the landward rock is a hobo sign meaning 'keep out'.
- A successful **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 4) spots that the wreck's occupied (see *The Squatter*).

Crossing the spur requires an **Athletics** test (Difficulty 4); failure means the Investigator nearly falls, losing 2 Health or 2 Stability (player's choice).

The Box

Scene Type: Alternate
Lead-Ins: Getting to the Wreck
Lead-Outs: Exploring the Wreck, Thwarting the Haunter

Climbing down to the box is more dangerous, requiring another **Athletics** test (Difficulty 6 – and here, failure means a damaging fall and likely drowning). The Investigators could use a **Preparedness** test (Difficulty 4) to see if they remembered to bring a rope, or come back later with a boat and approach by sea.

The box is a heavy metal casket, marked with a strange inscription. It was padlocked shut, but the lock's broken. The padlock's obviously a modern addition; someone drilled holes into the antique casket to fit a lock.

- **Languages:** The inscription's in Persian. With time (or a 1-point **Languages** or **Occult** spend to work it out immediately), the Investigator can translate the inscription. It talks about this being a 'casket of darkness' and called upon the gods to 'drive away chaos'.
- **Chemistry:** The box's lined with thin panels of lead.

This box can be used to contain the gemstone and its power, banishing the Haunter of the Wreck.

The Squatter

Scene Type: Alternate
Lead-Ins: Sinister Watcher, Getting to the Wreck
Lead-Outs: Exploring the Wreck

Living on the wreck is an eccentric hobo, **Thomas Willett**. He tries to drive the Investigators away if they approach, hurling first abuse, then rocks. Any suitable ability (**Intimidation, Reassurance**, **Streetwise**) calms him down and convinces him to talk.

- **Medicine:** Willett's clearly unwell – open sores, bleeding gums, and odd burn marks on his skin. His symptoms are consistent with radiation poisoning.

Conversations with Thomas are rambling, confused and contradictory. He's obviously unwell. The investigators can salvage the following information from Thomas:

- Thomas' brother Sam was one of the crew of the *Belle*. One of the drowned ones, he adds, not the two that were found dead. Sam
- Thomas believes that Sam's still alive – or will be coming back.
- Last time he saw Thomas, Sam told him that the *Belle* had been hired to transport an art collection from Europe. Stolen, Sam guessed, as they were told to smuggle it past the coastguard. Captain Lews told Sam the jewel of the collection was literally that – a ruby as big as a man's fist!
- Thomas had a dream about Sam calling for help on the night the *Belle* went aground. Thomas jumped on a train heading east as soon as he could. He's convinced there's treasure on board.

If the Investigators persuade Thomas they can be trusted, he confides that Sam's ghost still talks to him, urging him to find the treasure.

He's also seen "the devil" appear at night – a figure made of blue flame. This is *The Haunter of the Wreck* (see p. 14 for stats).

Exploring The Wreck

Scene Type: Core
Lead-Ins: Getting to the Wreck, The Box, The Squatter
Lead-Outs: Thwarting the Haunter, The Cultists Arrive

Stepping onto the wreck is nerve-wracking – every movement and every breath of wind causes the structure to creak and groan. Inside, the *Belle*'s clearly in terrible shape – there's debris and broken glass everywhere.

The *Belle*'s not merely wrecked – she's barely holding together. The next big storm will doubtless tear her apart. Rain and spray from the waves has flooded much of the ship, so the Investigators must wade through ankle-deep rust-coloured water thick with debris.

- **Art History:** Some of that debris consists of paintings, books and *objets d'art* – all worthless now they've been so badly damaged by the floodwater.
- **(core clue) Occult:** The Investigators find a waterlogged grimoire. Most of it's unreadable, but one section describes a 'shining stone' that is 'the eye of Thoth-Hermes' (aka thrice-great Hermes Trismegistus, the Hellenistic deity of esoteric knowledge). The grimoire urges the stone to be kept in the 'casket of darkness'.
- **Architecture** or **Notice:** There was a secret compartment in the bilge of the ship, but it was smashed open by the impact. It's likely that most of the art objects were hidden here.
- **(core clue) Physics** or **Geology:** A close examination of the hull discovers that the ship's not merely impaled on the rocks – it's as though the metal has *fused* with the stone, interwoven with it. (The *Belle* phased out of our reality and then slipped back, which is how it ended up on these rocks.)

The boat is extremely precariously balanced – one strong impact could cause it to slide off the rocks and sink.

Finding the Gemstone

The gemstone's only partly in our dimension. When the casket holding it broke open, it warped space around it, stranding the *Belle* on the cliffs – then it passing through the hull to merge with the rocks below. It's currently lodged under the ship, half-embedded in the stone. Extracting it requires a few minutes' work with a screwdriver or other prying tool.

The gemstone's hot to the touch (in fact, it's radioactive).

- **Physics** can locate the stone with a Geiger counter.
- Climbing under the ship with **Geology** and a flashlight spots the warped stone.

Failing all that, **Notice** spots an unnatural glow when the Haunter manifests.

The Haunter of the Wreck

The Haunter is an extradimensional entity, drawn to the space-warp created by the gemstone. The Haunter manifests as a hideous amalgam of bat and serpent and insect, all limned in electric blue fire. It's not composed of terrestrial matter, so bullets and other attacks can't affect it, but it can feed on the life force of humans. So far, it's spared Willett in favour of more nutritious victims.

Unlike the Haunter of the Dark, the Haunter of the Wreck can tolerate some light, although intensely bright light drives causes it to flee, so it only manifests at night or in enclosed, shaded spaces (like the interior of the *Belle*).

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The Haunter manifests when the sun goes down or if the investigators start meddling with the gemstone. It can't stray far from the gemstone, and loses 1 Health every round when it's more than a few metres away from it.

The Haunter of the Wreck

Abilities: Athletics 9, Health 10, Scuffling 12

Hit Threshold: 5

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: -3 (glowing blue)

Attack: talon (d+2), bite (d-1); a haunter can make two talon attacks or a bite. Add the damage inflicted by a bite attack to the Haunter's Health.

Armor: -3; bullets do half damage

On seeing the Haunter, all investigators must make **Stability** tests (Difficulty 5). Fail, and lose 6 Stability. Characters reduced to 0 Stability by this sight are **shaken** (+1 to all Difficulty numbers) and lose a point of Sanity.

The Cultists Arrive

Scene Type: Antagonist Action
Lead-Ins: Exploring the Wreck
Lead-Outs: Thwarting the Haunter

As an optional complication, four members of the Starry Wisdom cult show up at the wreck just before sunset. All four are dressed in understated suits, and drive a Packard touring car; they could be travelling salesmen. They all have ordinary, respectable jobs by day; by night, they worship the Old Ones, and are here to reclaim the gemstone that opens the gate of visions.

Depending on how the *Sinister Watcher* scene (p. 10) played out, the cultists may expect the only obstacle to be one disposable hobo (Thomas Willett, whose body can be dumped in the water and no-one will care) or they may be ready to meet the investigators (in which case, they carry rifles). However, the cultists are both subtle and patient; they want to recover the gemstone as quietly as possible. Their sect was driven out of Providence in 1877, and they still remember that painful setback.

The cultists know about the box and the protocol for safely storing the gemstone; it's possible for the investigators to talk their way out if they're willing to hand over the terribly potent gemstone to the cult, over Willett's objections. More likely, the investigators must find some way to escape the cultists while denying them the gemstone.

Nameless Cultists of the Starry Wisdom Sect

Abilities: Athletics 6, Driving 4, Firearms 6, Health 4, Scuffling 4

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +0

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapon: d-2 (fist) or d+1 (rifle)

Thwarting the Haunter

Scene Type: Conclusion
Lead-Ins: Exploring the Wreck, The Cultists Arrive

To stop the Haunter, the Investigators need to put the gem back in the casket – or destroy it. Smashing the gem opens up a temporary space-warp; anyone still on the *Belle* risks being dragged into eldritch dimensions beyond space and time.

Another option is to knock the *Belle* off the rocks; any large impact or explosion causes the ship to topple over the edge. It takes a few seconds for the ship to rip itself free and start to slide; investigators on the ship can make **Athletics** or **Fleeing** tests to escape with their lives. Anyone on board when the ship goes over the edge is killed.

Ongoing Investigations

If you want to use this adventure as the introduction to a longer campaign, you can develop the following threads:

- Where was the *Belle* coming from? Where did she pick up the occult collection?
- Where did the Starry Wisdom sect re-establish itself after they were driven out of Providence?
- And what do they want with the 'eye of Thoth-Hermes'?

Trail of Cthulhu 2nd Edition

"Cthulhu still lives ... in that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young. His accursed city is sunken once more ... but his ministers on Earth still bellow and prance and slay around idol-capped monoliths in lonely places. He must have been trapped by the sinking whilst within his black abyss, or the world would by now be screaming with fright and frenzy. Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men. A time will come ..."

In ***Trail of Cthulhu*** 2nd edition, your Investigators are pitted against the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos, based on the works of HP Lovecraft and his disciples. The Mythos posits that our understanding of the universe is an arrogant delusion, that we cannot bear the truth – we are insects next to the Great Old Ones who once ruled Earth, and shall return when the stars come right.

Your Investigators will face alien gods, monstrous servitors, sinister cults, immortal necromancers and perils for which there is no earthly name, no human conception. These horrors might be anywhere, from the remotest unexplored regions of Earth or dimensions that border on our reality only tangentially – or at your very door, in your family ancestry or clawing their way into your dreams. Ia! Their hand is at your throat, though you see them not!

You'll find traces and hints in occult tomes, in myths and legends that caught fragments of primordial truth. Follow the trail of clues and face the terrible revelation – or flee and take refuge in blissful ignorance...

The ***Trail of Cthulhu*** 2nd edition rulebook describes the gods and monsters of the Mythos, along with a veritable forbidden library of grimoires and blasphemous texts. For each entity, we give a host of possible interpretations, variations and heresies, firing the imaginations of Game Moderators and ensuring that even veteran players experience the chilling dread of the unknown.

This new edition adds more gods and monsters to the roster – the dreadful Black Winged Ones, Hound-Liches, sinister Revenants, the folklore-inspired Tylwyth Corachaidd, the alien Ultraviolet Devourers, Worm-Wizards and other horrors, as well as expanded rules for creating your own creatures.

A revised magic system incorporates the rules from the 1st edition *Rough Magicks* supplement, adds a new Magic ability, and updates the various spells and rituals in the Mythos grimoires to match. ***Trail of Cthulhu*** 2nd Edition also expands the use of the Cthulhu Mythos ability, giving Investigators who are already corrupted a way to glean unnatural insights and sense the presence of the Mythos.

Binding it all together – new advice and notes on creating Lovecraftian scenarios and campaigns in the expanded Gamemastering chapter.

For new players!

Powered by the GUMSHOE engine, ***Trail of Cthulhu*** is designed to make investigation and mysteries run smoothly, by putting the emphasis on the players' deductions and ingenuity instead of relying on lucky rolls.

Inside the rulebook you'll find

- Quick and easy character generation
- Simple but compelling rules for action scenes
- A guide to the Cthulhu Mythos
- A guide to the 1930s setting
- Comprehensive gamemastering and player advice
- Suggested campaign frameworks and two sample scenarios

About Trail of Cthulhu 2nd Edition for Existing Players

For existing players!

Trail of Cthulhu 2nd Edition is wholly compatible with all 1st edition supplements and adventures – if you've already played 1st edition, you'll be right at home. But we've taken the lessons and experiences of fifteen years of play to clarify some points, hone the rules and improve the rulebook.

Changes from the 1st edition include:

- A revised and simplified character creation system with easy-to-use templates.
- Investigative ability spends clarified, expanded and brought up to state-of-the-art GUMSHOE
- Clearer rules for contests, combat, injury and stress
- An expanded and revised guide to the Mythos
- Two new campaign frames! Play small-town folk suddenly become neighbors with the uncanny Beneath Unknown Skies! Pit your tommy-guns against the Mythos amidst the Shadows Under Chicago!
- Expanded GM advice! New essays on the elements of Lovecraftian fiction, on the Maze of Clues vs the Ocean of Clues styles of mystery-making, on one-shot adventures, on campaigns and more!
- Two new introductory adventures! Stop the Nazis from reaching a primordial artifact in "The Hammer of the Gods," and sift through the ashes of a disastrous seance in "Afterlight"

TRAIL OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITION

Player Name:

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
(8)	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name:
Drive: Curiosity
Occupation: Archaeologist
Pillars of Sanity: Faith in the power of the human intellect
Stoicism when faced with adversity

Sources of Stability

Your colleague in the Archaeology department, Dr. Woods.

Your younger sister, Katherine.

Contacts & Notes

You're an archaeology professor at Harvard, although you've spent little time in Boston recently, instead working abroad at dig sites in the Middle East. It gives you a dizzying perspective when you look at the new buildings and spawling cities of the US, and imagine what might remain in a thousand years...

Investigative Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Accounting		
Anthropology		1
Archaeology		2
Architecture		1
Art:		
Art History		
Assess Honesty		
Astronomy		1
Bargain		1
Biology		
Bureaucracy		
Chemistry		
Craft:		1
Ceramics		
Criminology		
Cryptography		1
Cthulhu Mythos		
Flattery		1
Forensics		
Geology		1
High Society		

	Pool	Rating
History		2
Interrogation		
Intimidation		
Languages:		2
Arabic		
Latin		
Law		
Library Use		1
Locksmith		
Medicine		
Notice		1
Occult		
Oral History		1
Outdoor Survival		1
Pharmacy		
Photography		1
Physics		
Reassurance		
Streetwise		
Theology		

General Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Athletics		8
Conceal		
Disguise		
Driving		2
Explosives		2
Filch		
Firearms		4
First Aid		4
Fleeing		
Health		8
Hypnosis		
Magic		
Mechanics		4
Piloting		4
Preparedness		6
Psychoanalysis		
Riding		4
Sanity		6
Scuffling		4
Sense Trouble		4
Shadowing		2
Stability		6
Stealth		4
Weapons		

Hit Threshold
4

Credit Rating
4

Cthulhu Mythos Potential

Magic Potential

TRAIL OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITION

Player Name:

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	(5)	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
(8)	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name:
Drive: Thirst for Knowledge
Occupation: Author
Pillars of Sanity: All experiences, whether good or bad, are great story fuel.

Sources of Stability

Lady Margaret Holland Wickham, patron of many of your past expeditions, and an elegant society lady with an excellent mind.

Your sulky Boston Terrier, Ruby.

Contacts & Notes

Once a respected professor at Harvard, you left academia to write bestsellers on forgotten empires and lost civilizations. Your books blend intellectual rigor with thrilling narratives, and your pursuit of scholarly knowledge fuels a career that borders on obsession.

Investigative Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Accounting		
Anthropology		1
Archaeology		
Architecture		
Art:		
Writing		2
Art History		
Assess Honesty		1
Astronomy		1
Bargain		
Biology		
Bureaucracy		1
Chemistry		
Craft:		
Criminology		
Cryptography		2
Cthulhu Mythos		
Flattery		
Forensics		
Geology		
High Society		
History		1
Interrogation		
Intimidation		1
Languages:		2
Greek (Ancient)		
Yiddish		
Law		
Library Use		2
Locksmith		
Medicine		
Notice		1
Occult		2
Oral History		1
Outdoor Survival		
Pharmacy		
Photography		1
Physics		
Reassurance		
Streetwise		
Theology		1

General Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Athletics		6
Conceal		3
Disguise		2
Driving		6
Explosives		2
Filch		2
Firearms		2
First Aid		4
Fleeing		6
Health		8
Hypnosis		2
Magic		
Mechanics		
Piloting		
Preparedness		4
Psychoanalysis		4
Riding		
Sanity		5
Scuffling		2
Sense Trouble		4
Shadowing		
Stability		6
Stealth		4
Weapons		

Hit Threshold
3

Credit Rating
3

Cthulhu Mythos Potential

Magic Potential

TRAIL OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITION

Player Name:

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
(8)	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
(8)	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
(8)	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name:
Drive: Bad Luck
Occupation: Private Detective
Pillars of Sanity: Boston is the best city
There are no problems that can't be solved with 'Tessa', your trusty Walther PPK

Sources of Stability

Timmy D., a cop who's a good friend you served with in the Great War.

Your doctor, Dr. Maxwell, who's fixed you up more times than you'd care to remember.

Contacts & Notes

You're a decorated WWI vet, now a down-on-your-luck PI in Boston, where you navigate smoky jazz clubs and back alleys, chasing criminals, lost souls, and any cases people will pay you for. Your unshakable moral compass often gets you into trouble, but you never back down.

Investigative Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Accounting		1
Anthropology		
Archaeology		
Architecture		
Art:		
Art History		
Assess Honesty		2
Astronomy		
Bargain		1
Biology		
Bureaucracy		1
Chemistry		
Craft:		
Criminology		2
Cryptography		
Cthulhu Mythos		
Flattery		1
Forensics		1
Geology		
High Society		

	Pool	Rating
History		
Interrogation		2
Intimidation		
Languages:		
Law		1
Library Use		
Locksmith		1
Medicine		
Notice		2
Occult		
Oral History		1
Outdoor Survival		
Pharmacy		
Photography		1
Physics		
Reassurance		1
Streetwise		2
Theology		

General Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Athletics		8
Conceal		
Disguise		3
Driving		3
Explosives		
Filch		
Firearms		6
First Aid		
Fleeing		
Health		8
Hypnosis		
Magic		
Mechanics		
Piloting		
Preparedness		2
Psychoanalysis		
Riding		
Sanity		8
Scuffling		8
Sense Trouble		6
Shadowing		4
Stability		8
Stealth		4
Weapons		4

Hit Threshold: 4

Credit Rating: 3

Cthulhu Mythos Potential:

Magic Potential:

TRAIL OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITION

Player Name:

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
(8)	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	(5)	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	(9)	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name:
Drive: Adventure
Occupation: Dilettante
Pillars of Sanity: Money solves all problems
Life is short, and you must live it to the fullest

Sources of Stability

Madison St. Onge, your boon companion since you met in boarding school, and owner of the nicest yacht on the East Coast

Contacts & Notes

You'll someday inherit your parents' vast fortune, but prefer to describe yourself as a fencing master and artist with a passion for Renaissance art. You divide your time between the salle and private study, when you're not off on often-dangerous adventures with Maddy, masked by your graceful, high-society facades.

Investigative Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Accounting		2
Anthropology		
Archaeology		
Architecture		
Art:		2
Painting		
Art History		2
Assess Honesty		1
Astronomy		2
Bargain		1
Biology		
Bureaucracy		2
Chemistry		
Craft:		
Criminology		
Cryptography		
Cthulhu Mythos		
Flattery		2
Forensics		
Geology		
High Society		2
History		
Interrogation		
Intimidation		
Languages:		
Law		2
Library Use		1
Locksmith		
Medicine		
Notice		
Occult		
Oral History		
Outdoor Survival		
Pharmacy		
Photography		
Physics		1
Reassurance		
Streetwise		
Theology		

General Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Athletics		6
Conceal		
Disguise		6
Driving		8
Explosives		
Filch		
Firearms		2
First Aid		2
Fleeing		8
Health		9
Hypnosis		
Magic		
Mechanics		
Piloting		
Preparedness		6
Psychoanalysis		
Riding		
Sanity		8
Scuffling		4
Sense Trouble		2
Shadowing		
Stability		5
Stealth		
Weapons		6

Hit Threshold: 3

Credit Rating: 6

Cthulhu Mythos Potential:

Magic Potential:

TRAIL OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITION

Player Name:

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	(9)	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	(9)	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name:
Drive: Duty
Occupation: Doctor
Pillars of Sanity: The fundamental kindness of humanity
Good will triumph over evil
Positive habits breed positive outcomes

Sources of Stability

Father Benedict Williams, your local priest and a longtime confidante.

Your loving spouse, Gussie.

Nora "Nonie" Magee, a skilled nurse and assistant to you in your practice

Contacts & Notes

You're a well-regarded, middle-aged physician in rural New England, known for your gentle bedside manner and relentless dedication to your patients. Despite your years of training and personal research, you are unwavering in your pursuit of medical answers.

Investigative Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Accounting		1
Anthropology		1
Archaeology		
Architecture		
Art:		
Art History		
Assess Honesty		1
Astronomy		
Bargain		
Biology		2
Bureaucracy		1
Chemistry		1
Craft:		
Criminology		
Cryptography		
Cthulhu Mythos		
Flattery		
Forensics		1
Geology		
High Society		1
History		
Interrogation		
Intimidation		
Languages:		1
Spanish		
Law		
Library Use		1
Locksmith		
Medicine		2
Notice		2
Occult		
Oral History		1
Outdoor Survival		
Pharmacy		2
Photography		
Physics		
Reassurance		2
Streetwise		
Theology		

General Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Athletics		6
Conceal		
Disguise		
Driving		4
Explosives		
Filch		
Firearms		2
First Aid		8
Fleeing		
Health		6
Hypnosis		6
Magic		
Mechanics		
Piloting		
Preparedness		4
Psychoanalysis		6
Riding		2
Sanity		9
Scuffling		
Sense Trouble		4
Shadowing		
Stability		9
Stealth		4
Weapons		2

Hit Threshold
3

Credit Rating
4

Cthulhu Mythos Potential

Magic Potential

TRAIL OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITION

Player Name:

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	(6)	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	(5)	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name:
Drive: Revenge
Occupation: Hobo
Pillars of Sanity: Your religious faith
Sometimes all you can do is laugh

Sources of Stability

"Aunt Millie", a kindly and generous old spinster living alone, who you visit whenever you can

Nobby Billy, one of those guys who can get you anything and everything, and often on credit

Contacts & Notes

Left for dead in a robbery gone wrong, you wander the streets, armed with nothing but your survival skills and a scarred face. You've lost street compadres to unspeakable horrors you can't name, and now you're fueled by a burning desire for vengeance on all that is unnatural to this world.

Investigative Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Accounting		
Anthropology		
Archaeology		
Architecture		
Art:		
Art History		
Assess Honesty		2
Astronomy		
Bargain		2
Biology		
Bureaucracy		
Chemistry		
Craft:		
Criminology		
Cryptography		1
Cthulhu Mythos		
Flattery		
Forensics		
Geology		
High Society		
History		
Interrogation		
Intimidation		2
Languages:		
Law		1
Library Use		
Locksmith		2
Medicine		
Notice		2
Occult		1
Oral History		2
Outdoor Survival		2
Pharmacy		
Photography		
Physics		
Reassurance		1
Streetwise		2
Theology		

General Abilities

	Pool	Rating
Athletics		5
Conceal		6
Disguise		
Driving		
Explosives		
Filch		6
Firearms		
First Aid		2
Fleeing		6
Health		5
Hypnosis		
Magic		
Mechanics		
Piloting		
Preparedness		6
Psychoanalysis		
Riding		
Sanity		6
Scuffling		6
Sense Trouble		8
Shadowing		
Stability		6
Stealth		6
Weapons		4

Hit Threshold
3

Credit Rating
0

Cthulhu Mythos Potential

Magic Potential

TRAIL OF CTHULHU 2ND EDITION

Player Name:

Sanity			
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Stability			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health			
-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name:
Drive:
Occupation:
Pillars of Sanity:

Sources of Stability	Contacts & Notes

Investigative Abilities	Pool	Rating		Pool	Rating	General Abilities	Pool	Rating
Accounting	Pool	Rating	History	Pool	Rating	Athletics	Pool	Rating
Anthropology	Pool	Rating	*Interrogation*	Pool	Rating	Conceal	Pool	Rating
Archaeology	Pool	Rating	*Intimidation*	Pool	Rating	Disguise	Pool	Rating
Architecture	Pool	Rating	Languages:	Pool	Rating	Driving	Pool	Rating
Art:	Pool	Rating		Pool	Rating	Explosives	Pool	Rating
	Pool	Rating		Pool	Rating	Filch	Pool	Rating
	Pool	Rating	Law	Pool	Rating	Firearms	Pool	Rating
Art History	Pool	Rating	Library Use	Pool	Rating	First Aid	Pool	Rating
Assess Honesty	Pool	Rating	Locksmith	Pool	Rating	Fleeing	Pool	Rating
Astronomy	Pool	Rating	Medicine	Pool	Rating	Health	Pool	Rating
Bargain	Pool	Rating	Notice	Pool	Rating	Hypnosis	Pool	Rating
Biology	Pool	Rating	Occult	Pool	Rating	Magic	Pool	Rating
Bureaucracy	Pool	Rating	*Oral History*	Pool	Rating	Mechanics	Pool	Rating
Chemistry	Pool	Rating	Outdoor Survival	Pool	Rating	Piloting	Pool	Rating
Craft:	Pool	Rating	Pharmacy	Pool	Rating	Preparedness	Pool	Rating
	Pool	Rating	Photography	Pool	Rating	Psychoanalysis	Pool	Rating
	Pool	Rating	Physics	Pool	Rating	Riding	Pool	Rating
Criminology	Pool	Rating	*Reassurance*	Pool	Rating	Sanity	Pool	Rating
Cryptography	Pool	Rating	*Streetwise*	Pool	Rating	Scuffling	Pool	Rating
Cthulhu Mythos	Pool	Rating	Theology	Pool	Rating	Sense Trouble	Pool	Rating
Flattery	Pool	Rating		Pool	Rating	Shadowing	Pool	Rating
Forensics	Pool	Rating		Pool	Rating	Stability	Pool	Rating
Geology	Pool	Rating		Pool	Rating	Stealth	Pool	Rating
High Society	Pool	Rating		Pool	Rating	Weapons	Pool	Rating

Hit Threshold

Credit Rating

Cthulhu Mythos Potential

Magic Potential